

# 10 Top Tips for Warmer Homes

## 1. Insulate and draught-proof your home

Insulating your loft and walls will reduce your energy needs and save you money. Draught-proofing reduces unwanted ventilation. If your home has draughty windows, doors or a letterbox then seals can be easily fitted and can last for up to five years. However avoid blocking air vents in your home. Ask for energy advice if you need it.

## 2. Check eligibility for insulation and heating improvements

Some households may be eligible for assistance for heating and/or insulation improvements

Check your eligibility now. Also consider having a benefit entitlement check as it may help with eligibility for services.

## 3. Make simple changes

Seek energy and other advice on simple behavioural changes that will help you to save energy, save money and stay healthy and warm such as:

- Preparing for and dealing with cold weather
- How to reduce your energy demand and keep the heat in your home
- How to reduce condensation and prevent damp.

## 4. Seek fuel debt advice

If you're having difficulty paying your energy bills and/or are in debt to your fuel supplier then get advice.

Electricity and mains gas suppliers should agree an affordable repayment plan with you. The "ability to pay" under this plan refers to what you can afford not what the supplier deems affordable.

## 5. Register for Priority Services

Electricity and mains gas suppliers operate Priority Services Registers for householders with special needs who are of pensionable age, disabled or chronically sick or hearing and/or visually impaired. Services may include large print bills, talking fuel bills, gas safety checks, special controls and adaptors, no disconnection of fuel supplies over the winter period or help in emergencies.

## 6. Control your heating

If you have heating controls and timers then use them. Get energy advice if you need it. Consider turning down room thermostats by 1°C to reduce internal room temperatures and save up to 10% of your energy consumption. However remember that it is always important to stay warm in your home. Ideally living areas should be at least 21°C and bedrooms 18°C in colder weather.

## 7. Control your hot water

If you have hot water controls then use them. Avoid leaving electric immersion heaters on for a long time as they are expensive to use. If your hot water cylinder doesn't have a jacket buy one for around £10 and save up to £20 a year on your energy bills. Setting cylinder thermostats to 60°C will keep water warm and save energy.

## 8. Use appliances & lighting efficiently

Turn off lighting and appliances when not in use and avoid using stand-by facilities as this waste energy. Only boil what water is needed in your kettle. A microwave uses less energy than an electric oven on full power. Defrost your freezer regularly to save energy. Fit low energy light bulbs as these can save you money.

## 9. Maximise your income

Ask for a benefit check from a local provider. You may be entitled to extra benefits and other services. Receipt of certain benefits may also help you access some energy efficiency schemes (e.g. ECO). Also ask your electricity supplier if you are eligible for their Warm Home Discount.

## 10. Monitor your energy use and energy bills

Take advice on monitoring your energy needs, use and spend. Supply meter readings to your energy suppliers and read all your fuel bills to help you manage your energy use and how much you spend. Take advice on the best available fuel tariff(s) and consider fuel switching to get a better deal. Getting the right tariff is highly dependent upon your lifestyle, energy demand and preferred payment method. Take advice on whether there is a cheaper supplier for solid fuel, bulk/bottled gas or oil supplies before you sign any contract. Solid fuel and oil co-operatives or clubs may operate locally and may have negotiated cheaper supply deals in your area. Also take advice on the best fuel payment options to meet your household needs (the best deals are usually for those who can pay for fuel by Direct Debit or on-line via the internet).

# ADVICE AND SERVICES

## Insulation and heating improvements (See tips 1, 2)

### Green Deal & ECO (Energy Company Obligation)

Green Deal will offer a new finance arrangement to help any household to pay for a wide range of energy-saving measures at no up-front cost – conditions apply. The cost of the measures will be recouped over time by a regular charge on your electricity supply. Green Deal is operational from October 2012. A time-limited government cash back scheme for Green Deal measures will operate from January 2013. Ask your provider for details.

ECO – provides a range of ‘free’ energy-saving measures to low income or vulnerable households unable to afford Green Deal. ECO is available from April 2013. Eligibility criteria and limitations apply.

The **Energy Saving Advice Service** offers householders information on Green Deal and ECO eligibility, available measures and potential service providers. See contact details below.

## Energy advice & advice on staying warm and healthy (see tip 1-8, 10)

### The Energy Saving Advice Service

Provides impartial energy advice to all households.

Tel: **0300 123 1234** (local rates apply)

- Internet: [www.gov.uk/energyhelp](http://www.gov.uk/energyhelp)

### Home Heat Helpline

Provides energy advice, advice on benefits, information on home insulation and special payment options your electricity or mains gas supplier provides to help those struggling with their fuel bills.

Tel: **0800 33 66 99** or Text phone **0800 027 2122**

### Preparing for colder weather

Take advice on preparing for cold weather and keeping warm and healthy in winter. **Age UK** can provide advice (Tel: **0800 169 6565** or see local services in your phonebook).

Alternatively look at the ‘*Keep Warm Keep Well*’ page on [www.nhs.uk/Livewell](http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell). Your local Age UK may know of local Home Improvement Agencies or *Handyperson* services that may also be able to help you improve your home or undertake small repairs.

## Priority Services Register (see tip 5)

Available to those of pensionable age, living with a disability or chronic illness, or with a visual or hearing impairment. Ask your electricity or mains gas supplier about their services (see your electricity or mains gas bill for contact details or call the **Home Heat Helpline** – see previously). Also ask about **Warm Homes Discount**.

## Fuel debt advice (see tip 4)

If you are having difficulty paying for fuel supplies contact your supplier in the first instance.

Alternatively contact **Citizens Advice** for impartial advice on fuel debt. Tel: **08444 111 444** or Text phone: **08444 111 445**  
Internet: [www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk)

The **National Debtline** (Tel: 0808 808 4000) and the **Consumer Credit Counselling Service** (0800 138 1111) also provide free services.

## Fuel switching (see tip 10)

Look for price comparison websites/services with the **Consumer Focus** ‘Confidence Code Accreditation’ such as:

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|--|--------------------|
| <a href="http://www.confused.com">www.confused.com</a>                 | Tel: 0800 074 0745 |
| <a href="http://www.energyhelpline.com">www.energyhelpline.com</a>     |                    |
| <a href="http://www.fuelswitch.com">www.fuelswitch.com</a>             |                    |
| <a href="http://www.energylinx.co.uk">www.energylinx.co.uk</a>         | Tel: 0800 849 7077 |
| <a href="http://www.moneysupermarket.com">www.moneysupermarket.com</a> | Tel: 0845 345 129  |
| <a href="http://www.simplyswitch.com">www.simplyswitch.com</a>         | Tel: 0800 111 395  |
| <a href="http://www.theenergyshop.com">www.theenergyshop.com</a>       | Tel: 0845 330 7247 |
| <a href="http://www.ukpower.co.uk">www.ukpower.co.uk</a>               | Tel: 0845 009 1780 |

Make sure you have your annual energy statement on hand before you contact a service provider as you’ll need to provide details about your energy use.

## Benefit entitlement checks (see tip 2 & 9)

A number of agencies can provide advice and support if you need help accessing your benefit entitlements. Your first point of contact should be your local authority benefits team (see your local phonebook).

**Citizens Advice** may provide this service locally (see contact details above). Other agencies such as the **Department for Work and Pensions** (see local phonebook) or voluntary sector agencies such as **Age UK** (Tel: **0800 169 6565**) provide services. The **Home Heat Helpline** (see previously) can also check eligibility for energy supplier services (including the **Warm Homes Discount**).

For further energy advice visit NEA’s website : [www.nea.org.uk](http://www.nea.org.uk)

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A large print version of this resource is available.